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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
7 October 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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25X1

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page Denied

7 October 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

US pilots report they knocked out a railway bridge in the 7 October strike along the Hanoi-Pingshiang rail line. The pilots also believe US planes downed a MIG with an air-to-air missile during an air engagement which occurred during the strike. In the South, several major US ground operations continued without encountering any significant Communist resistance. The Saigon government is reportedly considering closing down some of the French rubber plantations on the grounds that they provide support for the Viet Cong.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
"Operation X-RAY I"--ground sweep by battalion-strength elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa Province--entered its fourth day today with only scattered resistance from enemy units in the area (Para. 1). An estimated reinforced Viet Cong platoon sustained casualties of 17 killed and 10 captured when contacted by search-and-destroy elements of the 1st Brigade/101st US Airborne Division northeast of Qui Nhon, in Binh Dinh Province, on 5 October (Para. 2). Meanwhile, Operation Red Bayonet by the 2nd Battalion/7th Cavalry/1st US Cavalry Division (Airmobile) near An Khe, in Binh Dinh Province, continues according to plan (Para. 3). ARVN sources now claim that 290 Viet Cong were killed during the heavy fighting in An Xuyen Province on 3-4 October (Para. 4). Major combat elements of the US 1st Infantry Division continue to arrive in South Vietnam (Para. 5).

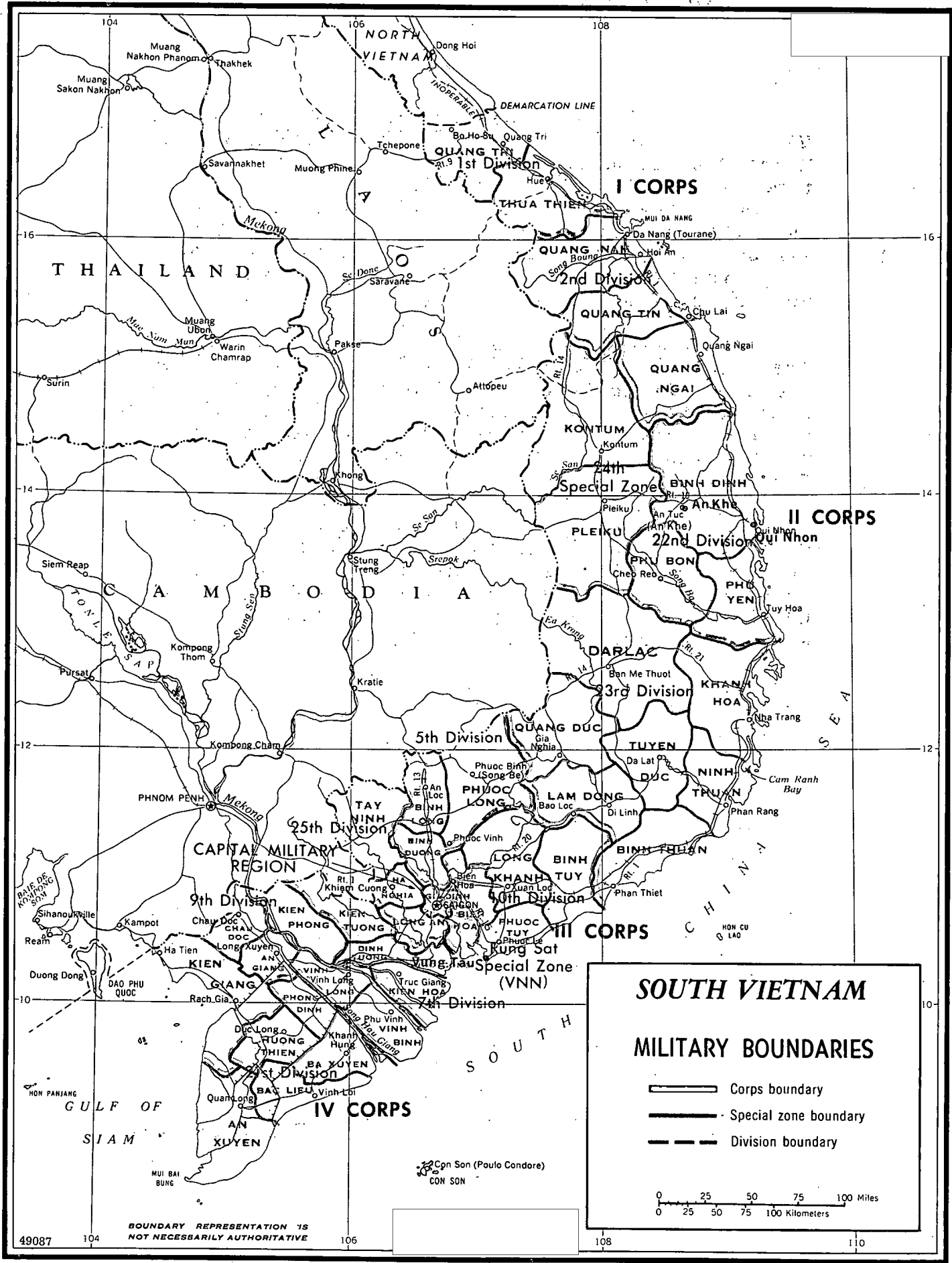
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Premier Ky returned to Saigon today from his three-day official visit to Malaysia (Para. 1). South Vietnam's Labor Ministry is reportedly promoting a proposal to order closure of at least certain French-owned rubber plantations in insecure areas on the grounds that they are sources of supply, recruitment, and funds to the Viet Cong (Paras. 2-3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US aircraft heavily damaged another bridge on the Hanoi-Pinghsiang rail line today, according to pilot reports. A clash between MIGs and US aircraft occurred during the strike; US pilots believe one of the MIGs was downed with an air-to-air-missile (Paras. 1-3). Two more SAM sites have been detected in photography of the DRV, bringing the number of confirmed sites to 24 (Para. 5).

V. Communist Political Developments: The Hungarian foreign minister, in a speech at the UN on 6 October, emphasized the importance that Hanoi is attaching to a cessation of the bombings on the DRV before any move toward talks on settling the war can be made. (Paras. 1-3).

7 October 1965

25X1



25X1

I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. "Operation X-RAY I"--the ground sweep by battalion-strength elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa Province--entered its fourth day today with only scattered resistance from enemy units in the area. Cumulative Viet Cong losses to date stand at an estimated 65 killed (15 confirmed by body count), one captured, and 11 tons of salt and several tons of rice seized. Seven Americans have been killed and 29 wounded thus far.

2. In Binh Dinh Province, northeast of Qui Nhon, elements of the 1st Brigade/US 101st Airborne Division established contact with an estimated reinforced Viet Cong platoon in the opening phase of Operation Nashville on 5 October. In the firefight that ensued, 17 guerrillas were killed and ten captured, as against US casualties of three killed and ten wounded.

3. Operation Red Bayonet by the 2d Battalion/7th Cavalry/1st US Cavalry Division (Airmobile) near An Khe, in Binh Dinh Province, continues according to plan, with 54 Viet Cong suspects detained thus far. US losses stand at one killed and seven wounded.

4. In a further search of the battle area in southernmost An Xuyen Province where a major ARVN/Viet Cong engagement occurred during 3-4 October, government forces yesterday discovered 220 additional Viet Cong bodies and a quantity of miscellaneous equipment, thus bringing total enemy casualties in the two days of fighting to 290 killed. Friendly losses remain as previously reported: eight killed and 43 wounded (4 US).

5. The total strength of the 1st US Infantry Division in South Vietnam increased to 6,200 yesterday, with the arrival of 2,231 combat personnel at Vung Tau. The division's 9,000 remaining personnel are scheduled to arrive prior to 20 October.

7 October 1965

I-1

25X1

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

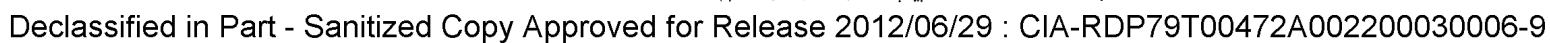
1. Premier Ky returned to Saigon today from his three-day official visit to Malaysia. Preliminary reporting on the joint communiqué signed at the conclusion of Ky's visit indicates that South Vietnam was assured of Malaysia's support in its struggle against Communism, but no specific mention was made of material or military help.

2. The US Embassy in Saigon has reported that, since mid-August, South Vietnam's Labor Ministry has been pushing a proposal to order the closing, on military grounds, of at least some of the larger French-owned rubber plantations operating in Viet Cong - dominated areas. Workers would be resettled to less threatened plantations, where security would be reinforced and production stepped up in an effort to maintain the average national output of the past two years. The rationale for this proposal, which has support from the country's Plantation Workers' Federation is that the plantations are now serving as sources of supply, recruitment, and funds for the Viet Cong, and that the workers themselves are becoming increasingly dissatisfied over the situation.

3. The embassy reports that this idea is still being quietly circulated although Labor Ministry officials indicate that their initial proposals, dealing specifically with some nine plantations involving about 7,500 workers, in seven provinces, drew an effective rebuff from the military. The Labor Ministry's proposals, in addition to the possibility of causing new frictions with the French owners, could lead to a radical departure from past policies of maintaining the plantations in operation. They are now South Vietnam's main source of foreign exchange and of nonfarm agricultural employment--about 40,000 total workers.

7 October 1965

II-2



III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. During the strike against the Vu Chua rail bridge on 7 October, two US Navy F4B Phantoms flying MIG patrol sighted three MIGs. The F4Bs turned to attack and launched a Sparrow air-to-air missile which was observed exploding about ten feet behind one of the MIGs. Other US pilots in the area report what may have been the crash of the MIG. An orange flash and black smoke were observed coming from a position on the ground somewhat south of the location of the engagement.

2. Strike pilots reported that two missiles were launched from the vicinity of Kep which is about seven miles south of the target. No aircraft were hit.

3. Pilot reports indicate that the northern half of the Vu Chua bridge was dropped into the water and damage was inflicted on the other half. Heavy damage to rail cars and track in the area of the bridge was also reported.

25X1

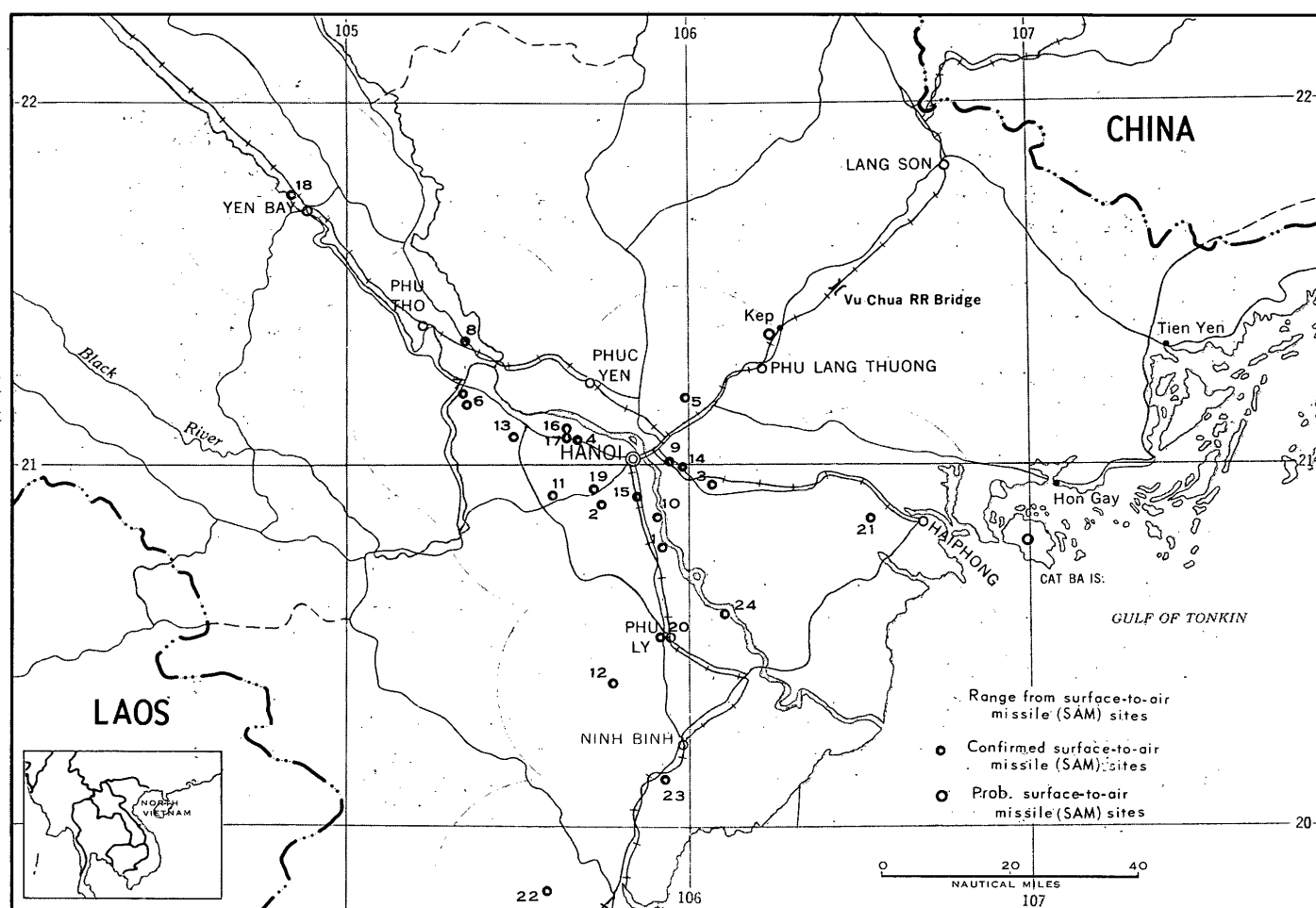
5. The 23rd and 24th North Vietnamese SAM sites have been discovered in aerial photography. No. 23 is located about 22 miles northeast of Thanh Hoa, just east of the major north-south road and rail lines near the DRV coast. No. 24 is located approximately 31 miles southeast of Hanoi. Both sites appear to be completed, although no missile

7 October 1965

III-1

25X1

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equipment was noted. In addition to the 24 SAM sites now confirmed by photography, two other sites were discovered by US aircraft on 5 October. One is located on Cat Ba Island and the other is southwest of Kep.

7 October 1965

III-2

25X1

Page Denied

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Peter, in a 6 October speech at the UN, claimed that the US has never made any "real peace effort" on Vietnam and that no "proposal for talks has any value whatsoever" until the US stops its aggression and bombings of Vietnam.

2. Peter's failure to include some of the other standard Vietnamese Communist conditions for a final peace settlement, such as US withdrawal and "recognition" of the Liberation Front, created an impression in some UN circles that the Vietnamese had altered their conditions, particularly since Peter claimed that his statements were made after consultation with both Hanoi and the Liberation Front. Other members of the Hungarian UN delegation, however, were of the opinion that Peter was only trying to make the point that a simultaneous effort on the part of the US to put forward "concrete peace proposals" at the same time that it stopped the bombings, would create a better atmosphere for negotiations.

3. In the past, Hanoi has sought several times to encourage third-party pressure on the US to stop the bombings, hinting that a cessation would facilitate negotiations. These actions, however, have seemed mainly aimed at eliminating the military pressure on the North, and not as an indication that the DRV was ready to talk. In each case, Hanoi has refused to commit itself firmly to talks if the US undertook a unilateral cease-fire.

7 October 1965

V-1

25X1

TOP SECRET